

FRENCH PRESS FORWARD IN GERMAN TERRITORY

In Drive Against Upper Rhine Fortifications Get Within Eight Miles of Muelhausen.

NOW HOLD IMPORTANT POINTS

Desperate Attempts of Kaiser's Forces to Halt Franco-Belgian Armies Again Prove Unavailing—Heavy Fog Makes Operations Difficult.

(Special Cable to The Times-Dispatch.) PARIS, December 26.—The French forces have pressed forward in German territory to within eight miles of Muelhausen, in their drive against the upper Rhine fortifications.

Considered in connection with the official, but amply authenticated statement, that the French gunners have battered a path up to the outer works of the Metz forts to the north-west of Pont-a-Mousson, which forts they are now reported to be shelling, this is the most significant of the fragmentary announcements made by the French War Office to-day.

The section of the official communiqué reporting the developments in the upper Alsace area, says that on Christmas Day the French "made perceptible progress in front of Cernay (known to the Germans as Sondernheim). We reached the outskirts of the forest on the hills to the west of the town, and here held our positions in spite of several counterattacks," says the communiqué. "We occupy also the outskirts of Aspach, the valley and the heights which dominate Aspach on the west."

Command of these two points, Cernay and Aspach, both of which are about eight miles from Muelhausen, will give the French control of the railway and highway lines of communication necessary to the maintenance of their columns as they advance again upon Muelhausen.

Desperate attempts of the Germans to halt the advance of the Franco-Belgian forces, which are cutting their way through the sand dunes northeast of Neuport, were again proved unavailing to-day, according to unofficial reports, and advance bodies of French bicyclists were again reported in the vicinity of Middelkerke.

The artillery exchanges moderated along the line of the Yser, and there were no infantry attacks on Christmas Day in this region, according to the official reports.

A heavy fog, which settled over the positions to the south of Ypres and about the line of the Lys, made operations in this region impossible during the day of Friday, but to-day activities were reported to have been renewed.

The action on Friday was mostly defensive on the part of the allies. Strong counterattacks were directed against Noulette (west of Lens), Holselle (northeast of Albert), and Lihons (west of Chaubert), but in each of these attempts the Germans were forced to withdraw without dislodging the defenders.

Another strong German attack was

repulsed at Chivy (northeast of Soupir), and in the region of Perthes, where the enemy assailed the French lines on a front 1,500 yards in length without success.

The artillery silenced several of the German batteries in the engagement near Perthes while the German gunners were shelling trenches which no longer contained any French troops.

CHARLES BAILEY DRINKS MERCURIC OINTMENT

Attempts Suicide at His Home on West Main Street—Is Removed to Hospital.

Charles Bailey, aged twenty-six, of 925 West Main Street, last night attempted suicide by drinking an ounce of mercuric ointment. The fact that he had drunk the poison was not discovered by other persons in the house until the man came to them and begged that he had taken the poison and did not wish any one to interfere. He is said to have taken the dose about 8 o'clock.

Ambulance Surgeon Stern was called immediately, and succeeded in getting the man to the Virginia Hospital. The stomach pump was used, but failed to prove of service, the poison having passed through the stomach. This sufficient time for the poison to enter the blood before it causes death, and for that reason Bailey was still alive at an early hour this morning. The surgeons at the hospital are treating him, but are uncertain as to his fate, as the effect of such a dose varies with the individual.

During the ride to the hospital Dr. Stern learned that Bailey's reason for attempting suicide was that he had been in ill health for some time. The surgeon explained that death from mercury poisoning was accompanied by severe pain, and this fact is said to have sobered the man considerably. He desired the surgeon to promise that he would shoot him if the pain became great.

WARRANT SWORN OUT FOR BLANCHARD FORBES

Charged With Recklessly Running Automobile on West Franklin Street During Fire.

Blanchard S. Forbes, of the Gresham Court, vice-president of the American Stone Company, will be arrested to-day on a warrant sworn out by Motor Officer Timothy Samuels charging him with recklessly driving his automobile along Franklin Street yesterday afternoon during a fire at 600 West Franklin Street. The warrant was sworn out last night, and Forbes will be arrested to-day, according to the police. He will probably be bailed for his appearance in the Police Court Monday morning.

According to Policeman Samuels, Forbes drove his car through the fire apparatus, which lined both sides of the street, at the rate of about twenty miles an hour. A fire engine was working on one side of the street, and directly opposite the truck and hose cart were standing. Firemen were crossing and recrossing the street at short intervals of time, and a number of pedestrians were also in the vicinity.

POIGNANT DISTRESS IS BROUGHT TO VOSGES

Families Have Been Divided by War and Brother Fights Against Brother.

THEIR SYMPATHIES DIVIDED

Material Sufferings of Alsace Have Been Bitter—Thann Made Target for 950 Shells, While Vineyards Have Not Escaped Destroyers.

(Correspondence of Associated Press.) THANN, December 15.—Elsewhere the fighting has been as violent as here in the Vosges, but here as nowhere else, is the poignant distress of mothers with French sympathies having sons fighting in the German ranks. The two nations which shared the Alsacian population after 1870 are now settling cousin against cousin, uncle against nephew, and in many other cases, brother against brother.

One of the six-inch shells that the Germans were sending from Cernay over the Engelburg into this old Alsacian town, crashed through the roof of a modest dwelling on the bank of the Thur. A column of black smoke poured into the street through a big hole in the front wall. The neighbors brought out a woman covered with dust, stained red by a stream that flowed from a gash in her scalp. She clutched a piece of pasteboard in one hand. While some of the rescuers washed the red-stained dust from her face, she watched others bring out her husband's lifeless body.

"If you could see what they have done to your father," she cried bitterly, gazing at the cardboard, "and what has become of your home, you'd turn your guns the other way. What are you looking at was a photograph of her two sons in the uniform of the Prussian infantry."

While those who adopted French nationality have escaped all German influences, the younger generation on the German side of the frontier has unquestionably become more indifferent to the mother country. The result is a situation which is illustrated by the foregoing incident.

The material sufferings of Alsace, from the Vosges to the Valley of the Rhine resulting from the alternate occupation by Germans and French, have been briefly related in dispatches. The

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fighting around Thann was particularly severe; all the way down the valley of the Thur, along eighteen miles of alternating ridges and gulleys, every inch of ground was stubbornly contested; the possession of it proved to be costly for both sides. The French are now installed here for the second time since August 15. They had pushed as far as Colmar about the time of the taking of Muelhausen, but were forced back again when the occupying forces were weakened to reinforce the armies in the north. The Germans recaptured Cernay and then began a systematic, incessant bombardment of this ancient town.

THANN HAS BEEN TARGET

OF 950 SIX-INCH SHELLS

In two months 950 six-inch shells have been thrown into Thann and 300 into the vineyards to the north. Sixty houses have been entirely destroyed, and many others partially demolished. Many of the streets are blocked by the ruins of crumbling houses. Yet the inhabitants have stuck to the town, occupying themselves with the aid of the French soldiers. In restoring such houses as it is possible to repair. The Cathedral of Saint Theobald—a real jewel of architecture, with some famous stained glass of the fifteenth century—has thus far escaped damage, though a dozen shells have fallen near it.

It was a little to the northwest of Thann, up the valley of the Thur, that the second battalion of chasseurs-à-pied (light infantry) accomplished one of the heroic feats of the war. The story of it is told by Leon Genton, a veteran of the Moroccan campaign, with seven medals pinned on his breast, who engaged as a volunteer at the outbreak of the war. The German had taken Blamont and Badonville, and when the chasseurs came through it was to hear the story of the shooting of the Mayors of both these towns. The Seventeenth Chasseurs, from Lunéville, had already chased them from these positions, and the Second Battalion joined in the pursuit down the valley. It was at the period of the war when things turned badly for the French. In Lorraine, as well as in Alsace, the Germans counter-attacked with strong reinforcements, and the French were obliged to fall back. The heavy artillery, posted behind a rising covered by vineyards, was ordered to hold the vineyard and protect the retreat of the artillery at all cost. They had no time to dig themselves in; nothing to conceal their position excepting the leaves they tore from the grape vines, but they held the position under an intense fire at a distance of only 900 yards.

At 3 o'clock in the afternoon the heavy guns had been hauled safely away, and the order came to retire. The officer who brought the order could find no officer to whom to deliver it. What was left of the company of 250 chasseurs was in charge of a corporal; when they stood up to be counted, after crawling back through the vineyards there were only fifteen left of the 250; all of the fifteen were wounded. They were loaded into improvised ambulances, some of them taken back on gun carriages as far as Serailles. Here an impressive array of officers awaited them. General de Curieres de Castelnaud, a distinguished-looking man with gray moustache and goatee, stepped out and greeted the survivors. "My brave lads!" he cried.

BOY PAINFULLY HURT
WHEN BRASS PIPE EXPLODES

[Special to The Times-Dispatch.]

LYNCHBURG, Va., December 26.—Joe Fisher, the fourteen-year-old son of Mrs. George S. Morris, who lives at Third and Munford Streets, received a very painful wound in his right thigh yesterday when he was struck by a fragment of an exploding pipe, with which he was playing. The boys had been celebrating Christmas. The boys had a piece of brass pipe with powder, and when it exploded a piece of the brass penetrated the boy's leg. The fragment was probed for, but was not located, and an X-ray will be used in an effort to remove it.

WATER PROJECT OPPOSED

Adverse Reports to Congress on Plans for Southern Improvements.

WASHINGTON, December 26.—Plans to accommodate barges of maximum draft between Norfolk and Beaufort, Inlet, N. C., by increasing depth of Trent River between Newbern and Pollockville from nine feet to twelve feet, were disapproved to-day in a War Department report to Congress. Work now is under way to establish a channel eleven feet deep at Newbern, fifty wide and four feet deep to Trenton, and nine feet deep to a point four miles above Newbern.

Other Southern projects adversely reported included that to deepen and straighten Coan River, Va., at its main entrance to the Potomac, and one to deepen the channel of Slades Creek, N. C., a tributary of Pamlico.

CONSIDER WHARF PURCHASE

The Council Finance Committee will meet to-morrow night, when the question of purchasing the Clyde Line

property will again be brought up. It is said that a majority of the committee is in favor of the purchase, but that the committee deems it to be reasonable. The committee will also begin consideration of a budget for 1915, as some of the members have already signified their intention.

The Street Committee will meet to-morrow afternoon at 6 o'clock to up routine matters.

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